

**Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.**  
**House Energy and Commerce Committee**  
**Subcommittee on Health Hearing**  
**“Examining the Federal Government’s Response to the Prescription Drug Abuse Crisis”**  
**Statement for the Record**

*June 14, 2013*

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, prescription drug abuse is an epidemic. And unfortunately it is a growing problem that is affecting too many American families.

Data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) show that about 15.7 million people aged 12 or older used prescription-type drugs non-medically in the past year, and that 2.5 million of these individuals reported using prescription-type drugs non-medically for the first time.

Particularly alarming is the fact that many people, especially teenagers, believe prescription drugs are safer than illegal drugs because they are prescribed by a healthcare professional and dispensed by a pharmacist. But with more than 20,000 deaths occurring each year due to the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs, we must

ensure that our research, education, and prevention efforts are addressing this major public health and safety concern.

The federal government has undertaken a number of positive initiatives. The National All-Schedules Prescription Electronic Reporting Act (NASPER), which I coauthored with my colleague Ed Whitfield from Kentucky, was enacted in 2005 to provide grants to states to establish prescription drug monitoring programs, so that these potentially dangerous substances are used only for intended purposes with legitimate prescriptions. The program, administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), helped ramp up state efforts to reduce abuse and diversion of prescription drugs. It is critical that we continue to support this program through federal funding.

There is also a great deal of work being done right now by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to implement provisions related to prescription drug abuse that were included in the Food and Drug Administration Safety and Innovation Act (FDASIA), which Congress passed last summer. FDA has been tasked with thoroughly reviewing all Federal programs regarding prescription drug abuse and treatments for those with prescription drug dependence and identifying any gaps. That report is due out this

summer and I think will be useful in the work of this Subcommittee. In addition, as we will hear from FDA today, they have issued guidance on developing abuse-deterrent products.

The Administration has also made prescription drug abuse a priority, setting out a plan to address this health epidemic. I support those efforts, but it is clear that we still have an unsolved problem that needs further attention.

I hope our witnesses today can help us navigate how we can find innovative approaches to combating prescription drug abuse while recognizing the critical use that many of these drugs have for patients across the country.

Thank you.